

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 8, 2004

The Honorable Richard Pombo
Chairman
House Resources Committee
1324 LHOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pombo:

Recently, nearly half of California's Congressional Delegation expressed strong concerns to the U.S. Forest Service about the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (Plan Amendment), a large-scale forest management plan covering 11.5 million acres of federal forests in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. The bipartisan letter expressed concerns that in its current form the Plan Amendment does not go far enough to protect lives and property from wildfires like those that ravaged southern California.

As you well know, the situation facing our forests is nothing short of a public health and safety emergency. We must encourage common sense, environmentally sensitive thinning and other active management at an aggressive scale and pace throughout these forests to protect communities from the kinds of devastating fires that ravaged southern California this past year. Continuing a policy of non-management will only put more lives and property at risk.

The Plan Amendment, adopted in the waning days of the Clinton Administration, has been subject to a rigorous, year-plus long review by a 6-person team of Forest Service experts. The team was created to address the multitude of issues and concerns raised in the more than 230 appeals that were filed against the Record of Decision (ROD). A final decision on the team's recommendations is expected very soon.

We write today to request a field hearing on these very important issues. We believe the time is right for the Resources Committee to thoroughly explore the long-term damage the Plan Amendment will cause to the environment and economy of California if left unchanged, and to solicit input from state and federal officials, forest experts, and others concerned with the use and management of our federal forests about the changes that must be made to the document to protect these forests, as well as public health and safety.

Sincerely,


JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
United States Representative


WALLY HERGER
United States Representative